

Marden Bridge Middle School

Lovaine Avenue, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear NE25 8RW

Inspection dates	19–20 April 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher took up his post shortly before the previous inspection. Since then he has provided strong leadership and this has directly resulted in higher expectations among staff. He has solid support from the whole school community.
- The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed systematically. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved and is now good.
- Pupils' outcomes are good. In most subject areas pupils succeed regardless of their starting point or background. Consequently, their attainment is well above expectations by the time they leave at the end of Year 8.
- A new system of assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding has been introduced and this provides teachers with an accurate view of the progress pupils are making.
- Pupils are polite and courteous both in lessons and around the school site. There is little disruptive behaviour and when it does occur it is dealt with well by staff.
- Pupils are able to thrive because they are well looked after and feel safe. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good throughout the school.
- Pupils make full use of the extensive sports facilities and enjoy a good range of activities.
- Senior leaders are thoroughly involved in checking the quality of teaching and they have high expectations. As a result, middle leadership has improved and a strong emphasis is now placed on improving teaching within subject teams.
- Governors have developed their skills and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is still some variation in the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, pupils do not make good progress in all subjects.
- Departments, such as English, do not share widely enough their good practice.
- Some disadvantaged pupils do not make the same good progress as other pupils in the school.
- Pupils do not develop their writing skills sufficiently in subjects other than English.
- Homework tasks sometimes do not interest pupils or extend their learning.
- In a small minority of lessons, pupils are not motivated and do not learn at the rate they should.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially in humanities subjects and in French, by more effectively sharing the good practice that already exists in the school such as in English.
- Improve the progress made by pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - provide opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills by using a variety of different styles and techniques in subjects across the school
 - raise the quality and suitability of homework tasks that are set so that they develop pupils' knowledge and understanding more effectively
 - motivate pupils in lessons by providing learning activities which build on their natural curiosity and inspire them to think deeply.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is ambitious for the pupils. He is passionate about providing all pupils with opportunities to succeed no matter what their background. His clear focus on raising the expectations of senior and middle leaders has caused the quality of teaching to improve and, as a result, pupils are now making good progress.
- Leaders at all levels have taken action to improve behaviour so that pupils are expected to work hard, do their best and cooperate with each other. Leaders challenge any incidents of discourtesy when they occur. Consequently the school is an orderly environment with a culture of tolerance and respect.
- Teachers are very well motivated. They respect the headteacher's continual push for improvement and give him strong support. The overwhelming majority of staff believe the school is well led and managed. The energetic approach of current staff has raised pupils' aspirations.
- The curriculum is specifically tailored to match the needs of pupils and is kept under review following recent major changes.
- The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities which encourage art, creativity and particularly sport. Leaders make effective use of the primary physical education and sport premium to increase opportunities for pupils to engage in physical activity and develop healthy lifestyles.
- The school develops the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils effectively through the curriculum, a range of assemblies and other enrichment activities: for example, putting up a refugee tent on site. These stimulate thought and provoke debate among pupils. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain by their life studies lessons which help them to understand democracy, religious tolerance and the importance of the rule of law.
- The school has worked very well with the local authority since the last inspection and there has been useful support from other external partners. Staff are eager to take up professional development. Leaders support newly qualified teachers well. School improvement advisers and a national leader of education have worked with leaders at all levels to improve aspects of leadership. Leaders are now sustaining improvements because they have developed their expertise well.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching closely and, through the appraisal system, hold teachers to account for their professional standards and the progress made by pupils. As a result of this more rigorous approach, many staff have developed their skills and taken on new methods of teaching. However, teachers do not share widely enough between departments the good practice already in the school to bring all up to the levels of the best.
- Leaders have devised and introduced a new system for assessing the knowledge and understanding of pupils throughout the school. This assessment system, combined with more frequent checks on the quality of work, means that senior leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Consequently, they identify weaknesses early and devise plans to improve the school's performance. This has brought about improvements in the core subjects and many other areas.
- Middle leaders in English, mathematics and science have made sure that the progress of pupils has improved so that they now achieve well. Some middle leaders in other subjects are new to their posts and have not yet had time for their actions to take effect.
- Leaders place emphasis on the performance of disadvantaged pupils and use the pupil premium grant well. They know pupils as individuals and so have a clear understanding of the challenges they face. As a result, the performance of disadvantaged pupils is improving and gaps in attainment between these pupils and others in the school are closing in reading, writing and mathematics. In some other subjects, such as humanities and French, gaps are not closing as rapidly.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The quality of long-term leadership provided by the governing body has improved since the last inspection. A new chair of the governing body was appointed soon afterwards and he has taken a lead role in addressing the areas for improvement. Governors recognised where they lacked expertise and recruited specialists with the necessary skills. As a result, the governing body is now better organised and more effective.
 - Training in the use of school performance information has allowed the level of challenge provided by governors in relation to the progress and attainment of pupils to be much higher. They now have a good understanding of the performance of the school in comparison to other similar schools, and are

able to ask school leaders searching questions.

- Governors ensure that the school's finances are well managed. They provide effective oversight of the spending of the pupil premium, Year 7 catch-up funding and primary physical education and sport premium. Consequently they have a good understanding of the difference this extra funding is making to pupils' outcomes. Governors ensure that all safeguarding training for staff is up to date so that all requirements are met.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. Appropriate checks are in place to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. All staff receive regular child protection training, including specific training enabling them to identify and deal with radicalisation and extremism. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are clear about whom to go to if they have worries or concerns and they are confident that they will be listened to. Leaders work well in partnership with parents and carers and other agencies so that vulnerable pupils are supported quickly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching at the school has improved and is now good because there has been a strong emphasis on raising expectations in the last two years.
- Teachers have worked hard since the last inspection to apply the school's marking and feedback policy consistently so that pupils understand how they can improve their work.
- The new whole-school assessment system, 'steps to success', is effective because it has been specifically designed to fit closely to the particular curriculum objectives at the school. Assessment information is cross-checked with other local middle schools on a weekly basis. This close relationship with other schools helps the system to become consistent and reliable.
- Reports to parents about the progress being made by pupils are issued in line with the 'steps to success' approach. They are clear, concise and explain the key concepts without jargon. They provide parents with an accurate idea of their children's attainment. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are pleased with the quality of teaching their child receives.
- Teachers provide work which challenges and stretches the most able pupils.
- Most teachers show a good level of skill and secure subject knowledge. Lessons are taught predominantly by subject specialists. Teachers usually plan lessons which engage pupils and stimulate their interest but occasionally this is not the case. As a result, on the few occasions when they are not taught as well, pupils lose interest and do not involve themselves fully in learning activities.
- Teaching assistants receive good training and work effectively with teachers to support pupils in lessons.
- Teachers set regular homework tasks. The length and type of task, however, is not always appropriate for the pupils. Too often homework tasks either do not cause pupils to extend their knowledge or are not sufficiently interesting to motivate them.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write extended pieces of work or to try writing in a range of different formats in other subjects. The English department does not currently share its good practice with other departments to help to bring this about.
- There are some examples of teachers developing pupils' numeracy skills across the school. For example, an enterprise project in design technology combined the practical task of making cakes with the skills of calculating production costs and setting a fair sale price in order to generate a profit.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

The majority of pupils are self-assured and able to speak to adults with confidence. For example, frequently during the inspection pupils smiled and said 'hello' to inspectors as they met them in corridors and classrooms.

- Pupils' books are neatly presented and well cared for, indicating the pride they take in their work. Pride and self-discipline are also evident in pupils' smart appearance, their punctuality to lessons and their readiness to learn.
- Pupils' achievements are increasingly being celebrated: for example, by displays of their work in

communal areas. These are developing a culture of affirmation which is raising pupils' aspirations and showing them the attitudes required to be a successful learner.

- When teaching activities do not interest them, a small minority of pupils are content to be inactive. While not being disruptive to others, these pupils do not take the next step in the lesson quickly enough and so their progress slows.
- The school offers a nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and well looked after. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe that pupils are both safe and happy at school.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through the 'life studies' curriculum. They understand how to stay safe online as a result of lessons they receive in computing along with a range of assemblies. These ensure that pupils' and parents' awareness of issues, such as the appropriate use of social media, is high.
- Governors and senior leaders have ensured that pupils are involved, through the school council, in developing policies to prevent bullying and promote good behaviour. Consequently, incidents of all forms of bullying are rare. Pupils say they know whom to go to if an incident does occur and they express confidence in their teachers' ability to deal with it.
- The headteacher is passionate about the benefit of exercise and sport for pupils' physical and emotional well-being. An emphasis is placed on the importance of sport and outdoor activity. The facilities for physical education and sport at the school are excellent and this gives pupils a wide range of opportunities to choose from. As a result, a large proportion of pupils are involved in either team or individual sports.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education as a result of a range of activities which give them good insights into possible future careers. Year 7 pupils, for example, have recently been watching short videos prepared by parents at their workplaces to illustrate different working environments.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school stresses positive behaviour, for example by developing an increasing number of rewards. As a result, pupils' attitudes are good and they have positive, respectful relationships with staff.
- Pupils listen to each other's views and support each other well. In one mathematics lesson, for example, where they were using tablet devices to explore the idea of ratios, pupils collaborated enthusiastically to help each other solve problems.
- At the start of the day, pupils typically enter the school building in a calm, orderly way. The same good conduct is seen at breaktime and lunchtime. A simple one-way system ensures that different classes move through the corridors smoothly at the change of lessons.
- Pupils enjoy school and generally attend well. Few pupils miss school on a regular basis. The overall rate of attendance is in line with the national average.
- Strenuous efforts are made to help pupils who need extra support to behave well. Strong links with local schools and a local pupil referral unit ensure that on the rare occasions when a pupil is excluded for a short period they are provided with alternative education. Senior leaders check that pupils attend, are safe and behave well when they are using this provision.
- A very large majority of the parents who responded to Parent View believe that the school ensures that its pupils are well behaved, and a similarly large majority of those parents who responded would recommend this school to others.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils join the school in Year 5 from a variety of local first schools. The attainment of pupils when they arrive varies from year to year. For example, the attainment of the current Year 8 pupils was below expectations when they arrived, whereas the current Year 6 pupils arrived with attainment that was above expectations.
- In 2015, the progress of Year 6 pupils from their key stage 1 starting points was average in writing but below average in reading and mathematics. The school was only directly responsible for the progress made by these pupils in Years 5 and 6, as they spent Years 3 and 4 in their first schools. The progress being made by pupils currently in Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics is much stronger because the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved significantly in the last year.

- Year 8 pupils leaving the school in 2015 made overall progress which was above expectations in English and mathematics and had attainment above national expectations. The school's assessment information indicates that current Year 8 pupils are achieving similar levels of attainment and this is confirmed by pupils' work in lessons.
- Pupils now make at least expected progress in mathematics in all year groups as a result of more engaging lessons which are based on a better understanding of what individual pupils know, understand and can do. Pupils have risen to the challenge of a more demanding curriculum which emphasises mathematical reasoning and requires them to think more deeply about the processes they are employing.
- The quality of pupils' reading and writing, displayed in English lessons, is good because of teachers' high expectations. Most pupils enjoy reading and are competent readers but they do not get enough opportunity to read a variety of texts in other subjects. Similarly, pupils' writing skills are well developed in English lessons. They are able, for example, to explain how specific techniques such as rhetorical questions can be used to influence the reader. However, they do not yet have enough opportunities to write at length in other subjects.
- Pupils are very articulate. They express their ideas clearly, with confidence and in a refreshingly positive manner.
- The majority of pupils respond enthusiastically to learning activities in other subjects, particularly science, art, physical education and music. In music, for example, pupils enjoy playing a variety of instruments and learning about international music.
- Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have worked effectively to accelerate the progress of the most able pupils by insisting that there is a good level of challenge for them in lessons. As a result of this collective effort, the most able pupils are now making good progress across the school. For example, in one English lesson, the most able Year 7 pupils were studying Act 1 Scene V of *Macbeth* and were asked to think deeply about Lady Macbeth's soliloquy.
- While the progress of other pupils in the school accelerated in 2015, the progress of disadvantaged pupils did not improve as much, particularly in mathematics. In the last year, as a result of good teaching and extra support, these gaps have narrowed. In Year 8, disadvantaged pupils have not caught up with other pupils in the school because many of those pupils are attaining well above national expectations. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is not yet good enough in history and French.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is improving over time. Senior leaders carefully monitor the progress of these pupils through the year and ensure that they receive timely support. Their attainment is rising towards that of other pupils.
- The school offers effective support to those pupils who are at risk of falling behind. It uses Year 7 'catch-up' funding to provide specialist teaching for these pupils. The school's information on the impact of this extra help indicates that pupils are making gains in their reading, writing and numeracy as a result. These pupils are very proud of the progress they have made and were keen to explain to inspectors exactly how they have improved.

School details

Unique reference number	108635
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10011971

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	459
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Oliver Harness
Headteacher	John Newport
Telephone number	01912 008725
Website	www.mbms.org.uk
Email address	info@mbms.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 March 2014

Information about this school

- This middle-deemed secondary school has pupils in Years 5 to 8 and is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is in line with the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding given to schools for those known to be eligible for free school meals and for looked after children.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed and significant staffing changes have been made to the leadership team.
- Support for the school is provided by a national leader of education from Benton Dene Primary School.
- The school works closely with a family of local schools as a member of the 'Whitley Bay Pyramid' group of schools.
- A very small number of pupils attend off-site provision at Moorbridge School on a temporary basis.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 part-lessons, of which four were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils before school, at breaktime and at lunchtime. They also met formally with a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6, and a group from Years 7 and 8. Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and one other governor.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents in 95 responses to Parent View.
- Forty-nine responses to the staff questionnaire and the school's own surveys of parents were also considered.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of North Tyneside Local Authority.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including information on pupils' current progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, the school's self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Paul Williams, Lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Nicholas Merifield	Ofsted Inspector

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